LABOUR MONTHLY

Founded 1921 Editor: R. Palme Dutt

WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

The Editor

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COUNCIL RENTS' PERSPECTIVE

Tom Vernon

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MORE ON KENNEDY

Ivor Montagu

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AN AMERICAN'S CENTURY

Bertha W. Howe

★

Barriers to World Trade at Geneva: Quaestor
Suez — Ten Years After: C. Enisah

NOVEMBER 1966

Two Shillings

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LABOUR MONTHLY

VOL. 48 No. 11 NOVEMBER . 1966

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Notes of the Month

WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

The difficulties of the times make integration and concentration essential. That is the true Socialism, as it is also the true Nationalism—and, for that matter, the true Individualism.

Rt. Hon. J. Ramsay MacDonald, Prime Minister of Britain, speech to the Federation of Conservative and Unionist Associations at Edinburgh, January 1935.)

October 17, 1966

Six years ago we wrote these Notes on the theme 'What Is Socialism?' Today it is timely to return to the theme. The heaviest modern capitalist offensive against the workers and the living standards of the people, to spread unemployment, freeze wages, raise prices and shackle the unions, is being simultaneously denounced by the tongue-in-cheek Conservatives in opposition as 'socialism', and glorified by the more ardent governmental propagandists, in a chorus of singular unanimity with Conservatism in this respect, as a triumphant expression of the true principle of 'socialism'. It is indeed time to ask: What is Socialism?

Forty-Ninth Anniversary

This month sees the forty-ninth anniversary of the first victory of socialism in the world—real socialism, that is, the ousting of all the landlords and exploiters (who are still on our backs in Britain) and social ownership of the means of production by the victory of the working people. That victory opened the modern world era, which has seen the extension of socialism over one third of the world, and the reduction of imperialism to a minority sector. Mr. Wilson in the peroration of his speech at the Brighton Labour Party Conference (just before the final invocation to the deity and recitation of a religious prayer after the best style of his predecessor MacDonald) offered his picture of the world today that 'in far too many countries socialism exists without democracy, or democracy exists without socialism', and proclaimed his alternative hope that 'we can succeed where others have failed', i.e. achieve the aim of 'social democracy'. This is the perennial gospel of social democracy to offer an imaginary alternative for the past forty-nine years. But behind this spurious alternative a real admission lies concealed. When he declares that

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in many countries 'socialism exists without democracy', whereas in other countries 'democracy exists without socialism', and that the supposed alternative offered by social democracy to combine both has so far 'failed' and remains only a hope for the future, he is in fact saying, in his own terms, that socialism has only been achieved in those countries where communism or Marxism has victoriously led the majority of the working class, and that social democracy has failed to achieve socialism. His formula for the admitted fulfilment of socialism in communist countries as supposedly 'without democracy', is sufficiently answered by the sternest test of the historical record, that the victorious working class and peasantry, confronted with the armed assault, not only of their former all-powerful rulers and exploiters, but of the invading armies of all the imperialist powers, fought back against the odds with invincible tenacity, unity and heroism to maintain their socialist regime—and that not once only, but a second time a quarter of a century later in face of the still more exacting conditions of the Nazi invasion and occupation. An imperishable expression of the will of the people. But for social democracy he can offer not one single example of the successful fulfilment of socialism, and after the damning admission of 'failed' can still only tender a pious hope for the future and conclude with a prayer.

Two Paths—Two Outcomes

This forty-ninth anniversary does indeed throw a vivid light on the contrasting picture of the historical outcome of these forty-nine years. Far removed are the days when a Winston Churchill could write (in October, 1920, in the *Sunday Express*):

> Let the Bolsheviks drop Communism. Let them leave off enforcing this unnatural system which paralyses human effort and dries up the springs of human enterprise and wealth.
>
> If they will not do so, nothing will save the cities and towns of Russia or the economic and scientific apparatus of the country. We shall soon be increasingly in the presence of that complete downfall of every form of life in Russia except village life, which Mr. Wells foresees.

Real life has written its comment on that prediction—which after all was only repeating the axioms still proclaimed as eternal truths by every speaker at the Blackpool Conservative Conference. The transformation of the old dirt- and disease-ridden illiterate backward backyard of Europe represented by tsarist Russia to the modern most highly developed European power advancing in front of all others alongside the United States of America, and already in the forefront in the rate of growth and in educational, scientific, social

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and cultural levels, is already familiar to all. But what has happened meanwhile during these forty-nine years to Churchill's Britain?

Britain's Crisis

Britain, the former premier country of world capitalism, the workshop of the world, the pioneer of industrial technique, the trading and financial giant which right up to the first world war still held the United States as a debtor, has, during all these years since Churchill wrote in 1920, sunk in the world scale, continued in chronic crisis, through the mass unemployment of the inter-war years from the winter of 1920 until 1940 never falling below a million, even when other capitalist countries were rising again, and after the second world war through the recurrent deficits in the balance of payments, with consequent ceaseless measures of restriction to combat the no less ceaselessly rising inflation. Under the blows of the crisis of capitalism throughout these years the people have again and again turned to Labour for an alternative. And it is the supreme irony of the whole epoch that Labour, the self-proclaimed champion of the easier path than communism, should in practice, by the very logic of its reformist principles, have had to become the instrument of the heaviest blows of capitalism against the workers in the desperate endeavour to solve the crisis on a capitalist basis.

Labour Governments' Dilemmas

Labour swung into office between the wars on the basis of denouncing the mass unemployment under the Tories, and fell in collapse in face of the heaviest onset of mass unemployment of the whole period and the division and disintegration when the majority of the Cabinet sought to impose cuts on the starving unemployed. Labour swept into power after the second world war on the basis of the mass anger against the Tory inter-war record of Munichism and responsibility for the war, and fell into the identical trap of the cold war with the consequent burdens of heavy rearmament, austerity and the wage freeze to make the masses pay. After thirteen years of Tory rule Labour swept back into power on the basis of denunciation of Tory policies of repeated offensives of restriction and the credit squeeze and stop-go, only to become now the instrument of the heaviest offensive yet of restriction, credit squeeze and the wage freeze, reinforced this time by direct legal powers to curb the unions and punish trade unionists in the courts. Truly the path of Labour's easier alternative has not been a happy one. It might have been better to choose socialism.

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Mutual Accusations

When Marx and Engels in their *Manifesto of the Communist Party* 118 years ago coined their vivid metaphor about the spectre of communism haunting Europe, they remarked how every party, governing or opposition, sought to accuse its opponents of communism:

> Where is the opposition party which has not been stigmatised as communist by those who wield power? Where is the opposition party which has not hurled back this scandalous charge of communism in the teeth of its adversaries, whether progressive or reactionary?

After 118 years this characterisation remains as topical as ever. Consider the two party conferences which have just taken place, and the accusations of socialism and Marxism and communism which have been hurled about sometimes in the oddest contexts. It is no matter for surprise that Conservatism should proclaim its primary aim to be the fight against socialism. 'Mr. Heath said that he rejoined the Conservative Party after the war to fight against the suffocating spread of socialism' (*The Times* report of his speech at the Blackpool Conference on October 12). It is perhaps a little more far-fetched that Mrs. Thatcher should have raised her enraptured audience to heights of enthusiasm by denouncing the selective employment tax as 'a step not merely towards socialism but towards communism'. But if we turn to the Labour Party Conference, we shall find parallel warnings, couched in their special phraseology, against the doctrines of socialism and Marxism. 'We cannot afford to fight the problems of the sixties with the attitudes of the Social Democratic Federation, nor in looking for a solution seek vainly to find the answer in Highgate Cemetery' (Mr. Wilson's speech at the Conference on October 4). The platform of the Social Democratic Federation was the nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. The same platform was subsequently adopted by the Labour Party in 1918 under the stimulating influence of the Russian Revolution, and still remains enshrined in its programme as Clause IV. Against Clause IV Mr. Gaitskell led his unsuccessful offensive. Mr. Wilson has proved more subtle than Mr. Gaitskell in finding a method of repudiating Clause IV. Similar warnings against 'Highgate Cemetery' occurred more than once in speeches supporting the Executive majority. To complete the quadrilateral, Mr. Wilson in his speech to the Labour Party Conference last year at Blackpool accused the Conservative Party of adopting 'a Marxist posture':

> The Conservative Party, always materialist, is now logically getting itself ready to adopt a Marxist posture (Conference Report p. 161).

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Thus the accusations are mutual. For both party leaderships 'Marxism' is presented as the enemy—which is in fact only their token language for the working-class struggle.

Socialism and Class Society

Denunciation of socialism as slavery was the familiar theme of nineteenth century liberal individualism. Herbert Spencer's *Man Versus the State* gave it philosophic expression. But with the development of monopoly capitalism a new phase arose which began the modern confusions in the use of the term. Increasing state intervention in economic affairs and in the regulation of labour relations beyond the old limits of the mere upholding of contracts became the characteristic feature of monopoly capitalism. This extending role of the state, already before the development of the first world war swept it forward in the direction of state monopoly capitalism, fulfilled a two-fold function. First, it strengthened the grip of the monopolies on the economy. Second, in the sphere of social and labour relations, it became the instrument for the rapid extension of liberal social reform legislation, which might be acceptable to the monopolies and more skilful big capitalists as a means to buy off the rising revolt of the working class,* but could also embody concrete objectives of active and passionate struggle by the labour and progressive movement, and even, in some cases, of open class struggle. The miners' minimum wage of 1912, however inadequate in its final provisions, was won by the first great national strike of the miners overriding the initial absolute refusal by the Liberal Premier Asquith, who declared that a minimum wage law would be a violation of the immutable principles of political economy. Not without reason Lenin signalised this great miners' strike of 1912 as representing 'a new epoch. . . . A change has taken place in the relation of social forces in England'. Thus the increasing state economic intervention characteristic of monopoly capitalism represented, not only the closer merging of the state and the monopolies and the increased power of the monopolies, but also an extending field of battle for concrete immediate objectives by the working-class movement.

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* The recently published *Life of Joseph Chamberlain* by Peter Frazer includes a revealing letter which he wrote to an aristocratic lady in answer to strictures on his social reform legislation and proposals: 'I am sorry to see that your friends are so angry with me. Some day they will discover what a good friend I have been to them, and how I have saved them from "the wrath to come".'

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'The Servile State'

In the midst of the controversies of those stormy years, associated with the simultaneous upsurge of working-class struggle and audacious Lloyd George liberal social reform legislation (in fact concealing intensified war preparation), the Catholic publicist Hilaire Belloc wrote a book entitled *The Servile State*, published in 1912. He argued that the advance of liberal social reform legislation and state organisation of labour relations within a capitalist state, replacing the old *laisser faire* free-for-all, represented, not a progressive advance towards socialism, as many of its supporters imagined, but the organisation of a 'servile state' or systematic state organisation and regulation of wage-slavery, including minimum social provision, for the working mass of the population for the profit of the small possessing class, themselves outside this public regulation of their lives. 'That arrangement of society in which so considerable a number of the families and individuals are constrained by positive law to labour for the advantage of other families and individuals as to stamp the whole community with the mark of such labour we call the Servile State'. We need not here discuss this analysis and its shortcomings. What is important is that he was not here describing socialism as slavery. He was not repeating the muddled outpourings of the Tory duchesses who refused to lick insurance stamps and denounced the Lloyd George social reform legislation as 'socialism' and 'slavery'. On the contrary, with his characteristic Gallic logical clarity he expressly excluded socialism from his definition of the 'servile state'. 'An ideal society in which the means of production should be in the hands of the political officers of the community we call Collectivist or more generally Socialist'. In other words, socialism, or the state organisation of the economy when the means of production belong to society and there is no possessing class, was not in his view slavery. But the state organisation of the economy and of conditions of labour within monopoly capitalism he described as 'the servile state'. This distinction and this ancient controversy is worth recalling today when the whole question of the state organisation of the economy, wages and labour conditions, and the role of the trade unions, within a monopoly capitalist society, is coming up in new forms for the period following the wage freeze.

'Totalitarian' Conjuring Trick

Since 1917 and the first victory of the working class revolution and socialism the vulgar denunciation of socialism as slavery has

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become a familiar theme, not only of reactionary Tory propaganda, but also of many reformist and right-wing Labour spokesmen. The catchword 'totalitarian' has been coined to put over the barefaced deception of endeavouring to separate state organisation from its class content. Under the camouflage of this word, communism and fascism are blandly equated. The imposition of state organisation from above on the basis of the violent suppression of the working class, for the profit of the Thyssens and the Krupps, whose wealth rises to astronomical heights and who are supplied with slave-labour, is equated with the victory of the working class expropriating and suppressing the exploiters, and taking over the means of production into social ownership to achieve the creative marvels of socialist construction. The living experience of the war sufficiently exposed this mythology of reformism. When the Nazi armies advanced into the heart of the Soviet Union, imposing terror without limit to compel submission, the Soviet people everywhere behind the Nazi lines, in the occupied territories, continued their indestructible struggle for their regime with the epic heroism of the partisan detachments unequalled in the history of war. When the allied armies advanced in Germany, the Nazi 'popular' structure disappeared overnight so soon as the military power of enforcing it was removed.

Class Battle Today

But the lesson has not yet been learned by the blind 'classless' reformist theorists, who still denounce communism as 'totalitarianism', boast of the advance of state economic organisation or regulation of labour relations within state monopoly capitalism as an advance of 'socialism', and do not see that these questions are always class questions. State monopoly capitalism, as Lenin showed, is the culminating phase of monopoly capitalism, speeded by war conditions. Alongside the terrible menace that it represents for the workers and the mass of the people, and in international relations through the generation of ever more destructive wars, it fulfils at the same time the historical role of establishing the material basis for socialism, so that between it and socialism there can be no further transitional phase. But it is not socialism. Socialism requires the political victory of the working class, leading the majority of the people, to expropriate the monopolists and take over the means of production for the organisation of society on the basis of social production for use. And therefore the class battle which now arises over the extending state economic organisation of state monopoly

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capitalism, not for the interests of the people, but for the interests of the big monopolists or imperialists, and finds expression in restriction, the wage freeze, the credit squeeze and overseas military expenditure, is today the decisive battle, not merely for the immediate needs of the working people, but for the future of the advance to socialism.

Labour Governments and the Class Struggle

This is the situation which has underlain the unhappy experience of four Labour Governments so far, and disappointed the hopes of so many supporters who looked towards them as the instruments for the fulfilment of socialism. These right-wing reformist labour leaders, these MacDonalds and Wilsons are not, initially at any rate, wicked men, so the subsequent disastrous consequences of their policies cannot be simply ascribed to their personal characters. They are not hostile to the ethical aspiration for socialism as a vague future ideal society. They are only hostile to Marxism, to communism, to the class struggle—that is, to the practical tasks for achieving socialism. They believe that they represent a more practical path of political advance in place of impossible revolutionary notions. They dream they can reorganise the existing capitalist economy to achieve a vast utopia of technological expansion bringing abundance and improved conditions for all. What they fail to realise, since they have no knowledge of Marxism (never having got past page 2), is that the capitalism they propose to reorganise is modern monopoly capitalism or imperialism, with its own laws which Marxism-Leninism has analysed, based on class exploitation at home and on a world scale, and in consequence continually confronted with contradictions arising from this class structure.

Unhappy Record of Four Labour Governments

Each successive Labour Government has demonstrated this contradiction and its disastrous consequences on an ascending scale. The first MacDonald Government in 1924 was confronted at the outset with the loco men's strike, operated the Emergency Powers Act against the dockers, bombed the insurgent people of Iraq, fell on the issue of a communist prosecution which the resistance of the labour movement compelled it to withdraw, and lost the election through the notorious anti-communist Zinoviev forgery which the Foreign Office was able successfully to plant on MacDonald because they knew they could count on his infinite anti-communist gullibility. The second MacDonald Government was overwhelmed by

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the world economic crisis of capitalism, and the last day of that Cabinet was spent in awaiting the reply of the New York bankers. The Attlee Government, returned with a record majority in the upsurge of popular enthusiasm over the anti-fascist victory and the alliance with the Soviet Union, proceeded to carry out the Churchill-Fulton policy of the cold war, Nato, German rearmament and a crushing rearmament programme, which replaced the programmes for social progress with austerity and the wage freeze, and consequently lost power to the previously hated Tories. But with the present Wilson Labour Government the process has been still more rapid, and the offensive against the working class has reached still more extreme heights.

Why This Crisis?

There is no mystery about the immediate causes of the present crisis, which has found expression in the deficits on the balance of payments and the instability of sterling, and has consequently given rise to the present draconian measures to freeze wages, impose crushing taxation, raise prices, curb consumption, restrict credit and production, spread unemployment and shackle the unions. Enoch Powell, whom no-one would accuse of communist or left sympathies, stated it with his customary precision from the platform of the Conservative Party Conference at Blackpool:

> He doubted if it was realised widely how much a part of our balance of payments was related to military expenditure, undertaken in foreign currency. Last year, for example, we earned a surplus of £273 million, and what converted this into a deficit of £354 million was the Government's expenditure in foreign currency, of which the largest item of £280 million was military. Thus our growing burden of external debt was not, as was often falsely alleged, to enable us at home to live beyond our means, but to finance our effort, and principally our military effort, overseas.
>
> (*Guardian* report, October 15, 1966)

Chancellor Callaghan from the side of the Labour Government said exactly the same, not indeed to the Labour Party Conference, but in his interview to the German weekly *Der Spiegel* on November 8 of last year (and similarly more recently in Canada):

> There would not have been a sterling crisis if we did not have to bear so much of the burden of defence abroad. We would have restored our balance of payments if we had not had to bear this heavy load.

Thus the Conservative and Labour Party leadership are agreed in this analysis of the cause of the crisis as arising from the burden of overseas military expenditure. Yet neither is prepared to throw off the burden. Only the Labour Party Conference majority declared

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for this when it carried the resolution to withdraw from the East of Suez policy and drastically cut arms expenditure. But it is now established and proclaimed on all sides as a high point of constitutional doctrine that a democratic decision of a Labour Party Conference must not govern the policy of a Labour Government. Both the Labour Government and the Conservative Opposition are agreed that the burdens of imperialist extravagance must be paid for by the masses of the people. Hence the present offensives.

'The Great Divide'

The Conservative Party leaders at their conference twisted themselves into gymnastic contortions to show how their policy for making the workers pay for imperialist extravagance differed from that of the Labour Government. However, their leading present publicist, Peregrine Worsthorne, in a pamphlet entitled *Conservatism Today* and published by the Conservative Central Office on the first day of the conference, gave the game away:

> There is nothing in Mr. Wilson's present policy which a Tory Prime Minister, faced by a comparable crisis, would necessarily reject. Mr. Selwyn Lloyd would almost certainly have liked to do the same in 1961 if he had not known that a Tory Chancellor would run into overwhelming trade union resistance.

Precisely. Here is the crux of the present situation. The value of a subservient Labour Government to monopoly capitalism in this type of crisis is that it can put over measures against the unions which from a Tory Government would have aroused unanimous resistance. And to crown the beauty of this allocation of roles Mr. Heath at Blackpool and his cohorts of hard-faced spokesmen of big business seized on this heaven-sent opportunity to present themselves as the valiant defenders of the trade unions and trade union rights against the offensive of the Labour Government, and to proclaim this issue as 'the great divide' between Toryism and Labour. Hypocrisy could hardly go further.

Toryism and the Trade Unions

The record of Tory Governments and Tory judges is too well known to every trade unionist to deceive a single one of them. Indeed in the selfsame speech Mr. Heath proceeded to adumbrate the aim to establish 'a new framework based on law which will be suitable for trade unionism in the modern world'. What would be the character of this proposed new Tory trade union law Mr. Heath

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did not venture to disclose in detail, but he gave sufficient indication of the threat:

> Just as Parliament never hesitated to legislate for the corporate life of companies and to safeguard the individual rights of shareholders, so Parliament should never hesitate to legislate for the corporate life of the trade unions and to safeguard the individual rights of their members.

Recent notorious court cases, and the legislation required to reverse them, are sufficient indication of what is here in mind, coupled with the customary demand that 'the unions must be prepared to deal with the problems of restrictions on the shop floor, demarcation disputes, the rules restricting output, and the rules restricting entry'. The Tory offensive on the trade unions is not the alternative to the Labour Government's offensive, but its counterpart.

The Real Divide

Even the official Tory organ found it difficult to define the concrete content of the supposed 'great divide' between Toryism and Right-Wing Labour so loudly proclaimed at the Blackpool conference:

> In principle the 'great divide' is defined. Certainly it is defined to the satisfaction of most members of the Tory Party. Yet the uncommitted still have questions to ask: what exactly is the difference in degree and kind between the unemployment which Mr. Heath regards as inevitable and that which Mr. Wilson is bringing about? What would be the precise difference between the kind of wages policy which even Mr. Macleod does not disfavour and that which, practised by Socialists, is repugnant to Tory morality?
>
> (*Daily Telegraph*, October 17, 1966)

Of course the real divide is not between the parallel policies of imperialism and the offensive on the standards of the people, whether represented by Toryism or the Labour Government. The real divide is between these policies of imperialism and the policies of the working class, for the break with imperialist military extravagance and for the defence of the standards of the people, represented by the left in the labour movement, and supported by millions equally at the TUC and at the Brighton Labour Party Conference.

Advance of the Left

The most striking feature of the Brighton Labour Party Conference was not the majorities won by Mr. Wilson and the platform for most of their policies. The most striking feature was that this first conference after the winning of the largest Labour parliamentary majority since 1945 should have borne no character of triumphal celebration or exulting confidence, but revealed instead an atmosphere of depression, gloom and doubts for the future. The most

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striking feature was that even the majorities recorded for governmental policies were obviously cast by delegates with no spirit of enthusiasm, but with at the best perplexity and embarrassment, and often with repeated warnings—once even by a Minister—of the very different state of affairs which may follow if the situation has not improved within the next twelve months. Above all, the most striking feature was the advance in the strength of the left, winning majorities, not just on some single special issue, as in the unilateral victory at Scarborough six years ago, but over a whole series of related major issues extending to decisive spheres of policy at home and abroad. Already at the TUC 4,223,000 votes had been cast against the General Council's support of the wage freeze. At Brighton the Transport Workers' resolution to replace redundancy dismissals by work sharing was carried against the Executive with the support of 3,289,000 votes. On foreign policy and arms expenditure the Transport Workers' resolution to cut commitments East of Suez and in Germany, end 'overdependence on American support' and considerably reduce arms expenditure, was carried against the Executive with the support of 3,470,000 votes. On Vietnam the Fire Brigades' resolution demanding pressure on the United States to end the war in Vietnam was carried against the platform with the support of 3,851,000 votes. The left is no longer a minority radical fringe, with the massed strengths of the bigger unions, as in the days of the Attlee Labour Government, voting it down. The largest union has now been exercising its voting strength, alongside many others, in the forefront of the left. The programme of the left, expressed in these resolutions, is achieving much greater cohesion. The left is becoming a power.

The Battle in Industry

But this is only the measure of conference votes. The full fight is developing all over the country, and most conspicuously in the field of industry as the ruthless economic offensive of big business backed by the Government develops. The mass demonstration of the car workers at Brighton, when their threat to invade the hotel compelled Wilson against his original intentions to come out and meet them, and thereafter to sit down to confer with a communist at the head of the delegation of leaders in whom the workers had confidence, gave a foretaste of the future fight that is developing. All the police threats in the world ('no party conference has seen such a formidable uniformed police guard for a headquarters hotel', *The Times*, October 3, 1966; 'Mr. Wilson's seafront hotel was

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ringed by 200 police, 70 of them guarding the entrance, forming a shoulder-to-shoulder barricade', *Daily Express*, October 3, 1966), and legislation to invoke the courts to impose penal sanctions against trade unionists on strike or daring to press wage claims, will not be able to break the workers' resistance to the wage freeze.

Left Unity and Socialism

This developing battle against the economic offensive, redundancy dismissals, the wage freeze and the assault on trade union rights is bound up with the parallel fight to change the foreign policy, end the East of Suez extravagance or support of the United States in Vietnam, and cut the ruinous arms expenditure which is the immediate cause of the economic offensive. It is bound up with the fight against the monopolies at home. It is bound up with the fight for the most urgent needs of social development which have been curtailed or placed in cold storage in the name of the requirements of the economic crisis. The inter-relation of all these issues is becoming clearer to extending sections. A common platform of all sections of the left on these issues is visibly developing. Such unity of the left is not only indispensable for the victory of these immediate aims. It represents the path to a new political future. For this reason it is timely that such booklets as John Gollan's *The Case for Socialism in the Sixties* and Maurice Dobb's *Argument on Socialism* should be published now. The disastrous policies of the present Labour Government are the consequence of their refusal of socialism and choice of an illusory alternative vision of reorganising capitalism, which has meant in practice bondage to imperialism and the financiers. But the fight for the socialist alternative, which can alone bring a real solution, can be, as these booklets make clear, no mere abstract presentation of a propaganda aim. The first victorious socialist revolution was conducted, not on the basis of an abstract slogan of socialism, but for concrete objectives of the mass movement, for peace, bread and land. Here at the present stage the mass movement is developing around the concrete objectives, recognised by all sections of the left, in the immediate struggle against the offensive of monopoly capitalism. The strength and unity of this mass movement, given political clarity of its most active participants, can prepare the conditions for further advance, to political strength, and eventually to political power, and thereby to the future fulfilment of the aim of socialism.

R.P.D.

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MORE ON KENNEDY

Ivor Montagu

A RECENT Gallup poll has shown that two out of every three Americans no longer believe in the Warren Report.

Seldom in human history has so monstrous a piece of nonsense, so elaborate and painstaking a structure, become so rapidly, so completely discredited. The air has collapsed out of it through two pinholes. The giant obfuscation has melted, like morning mist before the sun.

We come quite well out of it. 'If you want the gen, read *LM*' could be an excellent slogan for our fund. The moment President Kennedy was assassinated, the editor in the very first following Notes of the Month (see appendix, written within a few days of the murder), before damning new factual evidence uncovered by the indefatigable work of Mark Lane had begun to become available in the American progressive weekly *National Guardian* (after refusal of publication in all the other American press), pointed out the now admittedly significant features of the story. *The Observer* consequently commented on this prior role of our journal. As soon as the Warren Commission Report came out, broadcast over the entire world as a paper back, an article in the next succeeding issue (November 1964) subjected it to analysis and disclosed a few of its contradictions.

Certainly our voice was not entirely a lone voice. But how populous was the wilderness in which we then cried and which sought to shout us down! Can *The Times* ever blush? The *New York Times* printed whole, as it swallowed whole, every word of Warren. Overnight it became the longed-for manna. The multi-million news outlets of 'public servants' like the Thomsons, the gutter press and qualities alike, had neither doubts nor qualms. 'Truth' had been established. 'Rumours' were silenced. The whole world was satisfied. Only Reds out of step. The 'proofs' were now before history. The last word had been said.

But it had not.

And now, already: nobody will go to bat for Warren.

The bucket of whitewash with which the American establishment and its sacred-cow herds on this side of the Atlantic had sought to veil the form of the emerging truth is peeling off in flakes. The report is totally discredited. Its central thesis, its *raison d'être*, disproved.

Truly a fast job.

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When Kennedy was killed, the Dallas police picked up a previously prepared 'fall guy', a van der Lubbe, and shut his mouth. Just as did the Nazis when they burned the Reichstag. But let no-one say conspirators do not learn from history. Like the original of that name, this van der Lubbe—Oswald—also had carefully prefabricated 'Communist' associations. Somewhere along the line, however, someone of brighter intelligence than the lower echelons realised such allegations could turn out too hot to handle. You could get rid of the fall guy. But not even in a St. Bartholomew's night would you be able to dispose of every alleged accomplice in such an imaginary plot. Trials would *have* to follow. And cross-examinations which the fabric could not face. The Nazis convicted themselves because, in trying to convict the Communists, they proved that van der Lubbe could not have done the deed alone. When the crime would not stick on those innocent of it, the Nazis found their evidence recoil upon themselves. From the outset, in Dallas, the concern of the police became to conceal the traces of *anyone* who could be associated with Oswald in the crime.

And as such traces multiplied, this became the concern of everyone else anxious to preserve the good repute of the U.S. establishment: that is, the FBI, the administration, its allies and sycophants abroad, the 'media', even the Kennedy family.

Just as it was the concern of Johnson, the concern of Warren, the concern of his Commission.

But it didn't work.

It cannot work for anyone who reads the two books.* These two pinpricks have settled the balloon. The first, as most newspaper readers know by now, is a simple students' social study on 'how a society sets about improvising machinery' for a job of this sort. The answer is, as will be seen by anyone who reads: by assembling a group of signatories whose variety and sanctity will preserve them from criticism from as many quarters as possible, regardless of whether they have time to do adequately the job they undertake; provide them with inadequate staff, inadequate time, a number of alibis from all those in the establishment who are under suspicion; draft for them the necessary conclusions however much these may be contradicted by the evidence that, even in such conditions, has become available; and rely on them (justly as it turns out) to sign, whatever their scruples, when it comes to the crunch. The second is

* Edward Jay Epstein: *Inquest: The Warren Commission and the Establishment of Truth*, Hutchinson; and Mark Lane: *Rush to Judgment*, Bodley Head.

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a thorough blow by blow comparison (contrast rather) of the conclusions that the Commission came to—outlined in the Report—and the evidence that it ignored, contradicted and in some cases distorted, by far the greater part taken from the 26 volumes of testimony which the Commission has itself published, which were not available when *The Times*, *New York Times et al.* (but not including *Labour Monthly*) bowed down to worship, and which perhaps some people imagined that nobody would ever bother to read.

But 'Brutus is an honourable man; So are they all, all honourable men'. Indeed, their publication of this evidence which so pillories them is a testimony to their honour, if also to its limitations. There are none so blind as those who don't want to see, and the most generous—and almost certainly in some cases the fair and correct—inference about the members of the commission is that gentlemen in their position could not really credit that what was before their eyes was really there. Nevertheless, they did go rather far in burking what was so evidently before them, and the record of the Chief Justice of the United States ignoring Jack Ruby's repeated pleas to be taken out of the hands of the Dallas police so that he could reveal the truth, and angrily demanding of Mark Lane that he should reveal the names of his associates and how much he was getting out of it is not edifying.

Anyway, the whole reputation of the Commission for judgement (if not for honesty) is completely busted. And the central thesis, that Oswald acted alone, is as dead as the proverbial doornail, whatever poodlefakery has yet to be forthcoming. Indeed, it is quite evident that there is not a shred of evidence against Oswald as even one of the actual assassins, that is not so suspect of opportunity of manufacture, or so uncertain, that it could not stand up under cross-examination.

As a matter of fact, what is already established leaves little room for mystery. The story is plain enough, after all, in the natural and obvious meaning of the evidence that the Commission did itself, with all its faults, collect and print. The only confusion comes from endeavouring to stretch it to fit the Commission's self-preordained thesis. The modern American self-deceiver loves to flee the obvious and his refuge is Freud. Honor Tracy, in her book on the U.S. occupation of Japan, tells the story of two GIs who were seen to be rather shockingly engaged with two Japanese young ladies on a public lawn tennis court. Instead of disciplining them or reprimanding them, their CO turned them over to a psychiatrist to find out what they really wanted. In the same way Warren comes to the conclusion

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that Kennedy would doubtless be alive today if only Marina Oswald had forgiven and resumed cohabitation with her husband Harvey. Which, even if it accounts fashionably for his otherwise invisible motive, leaves everything else mysterious and unaccountable in his life story totally unexplained.

If we understand that he was a stool-pigeon and all his life had been a stool-pigeon, abroad for the CIA, at home for the FBI, one of those thousands of underpaid and despised narks maintained by the apparatus, incompetent, confident the network would stand by him as it always had, a natural victim, the whole story and his use in a plot carried out in alliance by a group of rightists and a section of the Dallas police become at once crystal clear. There are no puzzles or inconsistencies left at all.

It is fascinating to search the record and see how at first the Dallas police, the FBI, the CIA, the Secret Service were all accusing each other and bringing forward each other's suspicious acts, until at last they all became convinced they had so much to hide they shut up and started protecting one another. How could such men as the Commissioners doubt all of them, and the equally involved State Departments as well? Perhaps the most fascinating picture of all is that painted by one of the members of the Commission itself, Congressman Ford, who has revealed the panic that seized everyone when at the very outset of its work it heard from the Dallas police that Oswald was on the payroll of the FBI. Some felt that the evidence must be examined independently, some that to ask anyone but Hoover about it would be a sort of blasphemy. Finally, after hours of argument, the Commission adopted an almost British compromise, it impeccably decided to investigate the revelation 'in such a way as to avoid reliance on a questioned authority' and then in fact conducted no investigation of its own but did rely on it.

Before, however, anyone casts a stone at the Commissioners let us at least remember how many may be relied upon, by such predictable reactions, wherever sacred cows are concerned, to let the true offenders get away with murder, whether in Dallas—or for that matter, Vietnam. Behind the contented Commissioners—content to lie for their country and append their names to what just wasn't possible even on their own selected testimony—lies a myriad host of essential supporting figures: the fourteen publishers who turned down Mark Lane's volume of exposure before a British firm broke the silence, the universal lickspittles here as well as USA who so firmly declared the matter closed so few short months ago. And behind them, too, the Wilsons, Heaths, Stewarts, Browns who firmly

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and blandly—perhaps even themselves convincedly—still underwrite the second Texan fairy-tale: North Vietnamese aggression. Perhaps there is encouragement to be found in the fact that it was a British firm's initiative that made the break-through that has smashed Texan Big Lie No. 1 and brought Mark Lane to the top of the American best-seller list. In Hans Andersen it needed only a little child to expose the Emperor's nakedness. Perhaps we are not as helpless here after all as the present government makes out.

APPENDIX

Any speculation at present can only be in the air, since the essential facts are still hidden. But on the face of it this highly organised coup (even to the provision of a 'fall guy' van der Lubbe and rapid killing of the fall guy while manacled in custody, as soon as there appeared a danger of his talking), with the manifest complicity necessary of a very wide range of authorities, bears all the hallmarks of a CIA job.

After all, the CIA had just arrived fresh from bumping off Diem earlier in the same month. The Kennedy job was certainly a larger order to undertake; but the operation was manifestly organised with the customary elaborate attention to detail. Even the background information offered with regard to the van der Lubbe presented a highly peculiar story. From the Marines; a supposed 'defector' to the Soviet Union being rejected by the Soviet Union; after he has done his job there, returning with all expenses paid by the U.S. Government (not usually so generous to 'defectors'); endeavours to join the anti-Castro gangs in New Orleans, but is rejected by them on the grounds that they regard him as an agent of the CIA; turns up next as a supposed Chairman of a non-existent branch of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, which denies knowledge of him or the existence of any branch either in Louisiana or Texas; applies vainly for a visa to Cuba; travels widely with no visible source of finance. Here is typical small fry fit to be chosen, and equipped with damning 'evidence' as an expendable fall guy, while a more skilled hand does the deed. By accident, when the whole of Dallas is screened in vigilant preparation, the one most strategic building on the route is overlooked. By accident the one notorious suspect, already under supervision by the FBI, but intended this time to be found as a suspect, is overlooked in the general rounding up and clearing out of all suspects. By accident, when immediately after the murder the whole building is swarming with police, he is able to walk out unmolested. And then when the unhappy fall guy, tricked and trapped and no doubt double-crossed in face of previous promises of an easy getaway and rich reward, noisily protests his innocence, a quick shot inside the prison closes his mouth; and the shot is fired, oddly enough, again through an accidental oversight in letting this unauthorised intruder come close with a revolver, by a type described as an underworld character close to the police. No. The whole story is really too thick. Of course it will all be cleared up now by the Presidential Commission of Enquiry. Or perhaps not. Naturally we can have every confidence. For on the Presidential Commission Enquiry sits appropriately enough our old friend Allen Dulles, former Director of the CIA.

(From the Notes of the Month written on December 10, 1963.)

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COUNCIL RENTS' PERSPECTIVE

Tom Vernon*

THE limelight was briefly cast afresh on the chronic problem of council rents when the Minister of Housing (Mr. Crossman at the time) asked Birmingham County Borough Council and others to 'freeze' an announced rents rise. A number of councils more or less ready to announce rises postponed their decisions without waiting for his appeal.

These rises are mainly to offset losses actually incurred and only to a smaller degree anticipate continuing losses if such rises were not obtained. Actually incurred losses are necessarily borne by a council's General Rate Fund, i.e., there is no other way of 'absorbing' them as a company can absorb losses in accumulated past profits. Consequently, a rise in rates is automatically involved by these rent rise freezes. Manufacturers and commercial concerns (e.g. shops) will be able to recover these extra rates by price rises and the rents freeze will therefore have an inflationary effect. Householders, of course, will have to absorb the rate rises out of their pockets, without remedy.

This point is made to emphasise that losses on council housing cannot be 'carried forward'. Someone has to meet them. Either the tenants or the ratepayers, or both, by sharing the burden. It is of general concern, therefore, to consider the position responsible for such losses and to judge whether any end to them is in sight.

Clearly, rising administrative expenses and repairs costs resulting from the general inflation necessitate occasional small rises or further subsidy from the rate fund. The rises we mainly hear about are, however, large ones. What causes them? The Minister of Housing gave the answer in his White Paper 'The Housing Programme 1965 to 1970' (Cmnd. 2838) of November 1965, in para. 31:

> Present rates of housing subsidies are inadequate even for the present rate of housebuilding. They were settled in 1961; and even then they had no relationship to the cost of building. The worst trouble which has beset the local authorities has been uncertainty about interest charges, which account for a very substantial part of each authority's annual costs on new housing. This uncertainty, and the high rates of interest prevailing in recent times, have made forward programming very difficult. Another trouble has been that the present subsidy structure does not sufficiently allow for the fact that the cost of building, including land cost, is necessarily higher in some areas than in others.

* Councillor Vernon is the President of the National Association of Tenants and Residents.

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Since then interest has risen to 7 per cent for Government loans and for ones obtained from the money market to 7½ per cent and 8 per cent. The existing 'subsidy structure' remains inadequate and the Bill which is to grant bigger ones cannot start to be effective until 1967/68, i.e. on houses sanctioned for loan after November 25, 1965. All existing houses and ones now being built (sanctioned prior to November 1965) will get only the acknowledged inadequate subsidy inherited from the Tory regime—and loan interest higher on the new ones than when the White Paper was written. The permanent loans continue for 60 years at whatever rate they started at and the State subsidy similarly.

The Government has no current proposal for correcting the injustice and folly it plainly recognises to exist nor, as I understand, any intention of granting supplementary aid for existing obligations at some future date.

Despite the high rents mostly charged for new housing built under such discouraging auspices, they were insufficient to prevent losses without raids upon the pockets of existing tenants through rent additions openly 'justified' as needed to meet the heavy costs of current housebuilding. The rate funds, too, had to be raided if only for temporary periods. These burdens include not only heavy interest, only in part assisted by inadequate subsidy, but ever more costly land and ever-rising building costs, both meaning higher capital costs and correspondingly bigger loans at heavy interest rate. The following Table shows a picture of rents.

Average lowest and highest rents without rates charged for 3-bedroom houses built since 1945 in England and Wales

	Lowest Average		*Highest Average*	
	s.	*d.*	*s.*	*d.*
County Boroughs	*21*	*9*	*51*	*9*
Non-County Boroughs	*20*	*10*	*68*	*10*
Urban Districts	*18*	*8*	*51*	*3*
Rural Districts	*19*	*3*	*50*	*4*
12 former London Boroughs	*39*	*5*	*89*	*6*

('*Housing Statistics*' *1964/65, I.M.T.A.*)

The corresponding figures for non-county boroughs 1956/57 were 13s. 6d. and 46s. 3d. showing the substantial rise over 11 years. Cost of building for these authorities have risen per foot super from a lowest 15s. 5d. and a highest 48s. 4d. in 1956/57 to 35s. and 88s.

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respectively in 1964/65. As a proportion of housing revenue, these rents have risen from 68.5 per cent in 1956/57 to 76.6 per cent in 1964/65, but State subsidy has fallen from 23.5 per cent to 18 per cent. The rents for 1964/65 for non-county boroughs as a whole approximate to eight-tenths of rateable gross value; the year previous they were seven-tenths.

Maybe we could take the view that an imaginary line was to be ruled across every council's Housing Revenue Account at November 25, 1965. Above it would be all the transactions of a council during all the years before this date. The bad old past. Nothing to be done about it now, even though its evil consequences will not be extinguished until A.D. 2025. Below the imaginary line will come the transactions of the new and reformed era when State subsidies will be adequate, no losses will be incurred, no levies will be made on houses built in the dark period of history prior to November 1965, no raids be made on rate funds.

If this picture of the new period in housing history now opening be valid, then we can look forward to a cessation of periodic rent rises such as have darkened the lives of council tenants since 1948. The remaining problem would be to get a revision of interest obligations and subsidy entitlements for past undertakings 'above the line' and thereby secure a lowering of rents on pre-Crossman housing. But is this picture valid?

The new basic State subsidy is a sum equal to the difference between loan interest at the rate generally prevailing in the year previous and the interest on loans as if borrowed at 4 per cent. With current interest rates, this represents a big increase over the old fixed-sum subsidies (£24 per dwelling, but only £8 for some councils). Assuming loans at the current 7 per cent rate over 60 years this is how the new basic subsidy compares:

	£	£	£	£
	2,000	*2,500*	*3,000*	*3,500*
Annual loan charge	*142*	*178*	*214*	*249*
Management and repairs, say ..	*20*	*20*	*20*	*20*
	162	*198*	*234*	*269*
New subsidy	*47*	*58*	*70*	*82*
Old subsidy (highest)	*24*	*24*	*24*	*24*
	s. d.	*s. d.*	*s. d.*	*s. d.*
New net rent	*44 6*	*53 8*	*62 10*	*72 1*
Old net rent	*49 6*	*62 4*	*75 0*	*88 0*

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Extra to the basic subsidy there are supplements of £8, £14 and £26 for flats of 4, 5 or 6 storeys respectively and for expensive sites, i.e., £34 per acre for every £1,000 above £4,000 per acre up to £50,000, with a further £40 per acre for every £1,000 of excess over £50,000. These supplements are virtually the same as at present.

Further, some grant is anticipated from the land levy to be collected by the new Land Commission, but no figures or formula have yet been announced. We should expect some relief over high land costs. All in all, the new subsidy structure is a big advance, particularly as the basic subsidy is now proportionate to capital costs and not a fixed sum from the lowest to the highest.

Bearing in mind that this Government, like its predecessor, looks to the councils as providers of new rented housing for people who cannot afford to purchase (i.e., would not be able to afford, and would not be accepted for, a mortgage), the new level of rents, taken with rates added, will be crippling to some tenants and quite impossible for others on waiting lists. Indeed, the White Paper clearly expects this to be so, for para. 41 says:

> . . . subsidies should not be used wholly or even mainly to keep general rent levels low. Help for those who most need it can be given only if the subsidies are in large part used to provide rebates for tenants whose means are small.

This plainly declares that the new subsidies 'in large part' will be fully needed to make reasonable rents possible for some proportion of the new tenants who are too poor to meet the level of rents given above. But neither the Minister nor any council has any idea who will be the tenants and what their means will be. The subsidy calculation is a 'shot in the dark' and, on all precedents, likely to be quite wrong in the sense of over-estimating the incomes of the hypothetical tenants. Further, quite wrong in the judgment as to what people can afford for rent without depriving themselves of normal necessities and small luxuries.

For my part, I would hazard the guess that there will be losses on the new housing schemes and these will be 'absorbed' by further rent rises on the older houses and by additional drawings from the rates. Anyhow, we cannot confidently look forward to a no-loss situation.

It is noteworthy that this new subsidy structure explicitly requires that tenants deemed by any council to have what it quite arbitrarily opines is a requisite income must to whatever extent it decides subsidise their poorer neighbours in the new estates. How this contrasts with the admirable policy of the Greater London Council who meet the difficulties of the poorer tenants by a 'social aid'

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scheme contributed to by the whole body of ratepayers (including industry and commerce, etc.) instead of a system of aid provided by one small section and, incidentally, amounting to a rate in the £ of merely one-fifth of a penny.

Two lines of policy clearly suggest themselves.

First, that pressure must be put upon all M.P.s—and especially Labour M.P.s—to secure an amendment to the Housing Subsidies Bill reducing the basic interest percentage to 3 per cent, i.e., the rate paid on housing loans at the time the Attlee Government fell in 1951 and for some years thereafter. This will reduce the risk of losses and the need to compel some tenants to subsidise their neighbours.

Second, demands must be made upon the Government to relieve local councils, their tenants and the ratepayers of the burdens created by the inadequate subsidies and excessive interest due to past Tory Governments and known to the present Government, as the 1965 White Paper acknowledges. A close examination of the actual annual cost to the Exchequer of outstanding Government loans for housing will show it to be a fraction of the interest it is getting every year, making it possible for a substantial 'cut' in outstanding obligations of existing 60-year loans. To denounce Tory 'inadequacy' is not enough: remedies must be provided.

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A PRESS

LAST month the Editorial Board of *Labour Monthly* put out a serious call to readers. They put the position squarely before you—'Rising costs endanger our continuance, we have to pay our way or go under'. Response is encouraging—but more, much more, is urgently needed.

A FIGHTING MAGAZINE

WITH a large poster tied around my waist proclaiming *Labour Monthly—Why 'Plan' a Slump?* I stood in the forecourt of Brighton Station. A skirl of pipes announced the arrival of the BMC workers and a cheer went up for them. With a wink in agreement and a smile acknowledging our support of their cause, they bought my copies as I marched with them to confront Wilson at the Labour Party Conference. *Labour Monthly* was the embodiment of their fight; their slogan—'Expansion—not Contraction' was echoed in our pages; their cause was championed and explained to others in our every article.

Labour Monthly is a lively voice of the left of the labour movement, but how can we get that voice heard by many more? Our slender resources make large advertising campaigns impossible; our staff is too small to be able to cover all avenues of sales; and we cannot visit every newsagent. Yet, wherever *LM* is seen, it is snapped up. Can you help? Can you introduce *LM* to a friend? Ask your newsagent if he will stock and display a few copies each month on a 'sale or return' basis? And has your library a copy?

Will your trade union branch take out a subscription? A railwayman reader, starting with two last year, has now reached a regular Branch order of seven. Another reader, a miner, has made six regulars in his lodge in a short time.

From this office we try to stretch out to every potential reader—join hands with us and we will stretch right across the world with this Magazine of International Labour, *Labour Monthly*.

Zelda Curtis.

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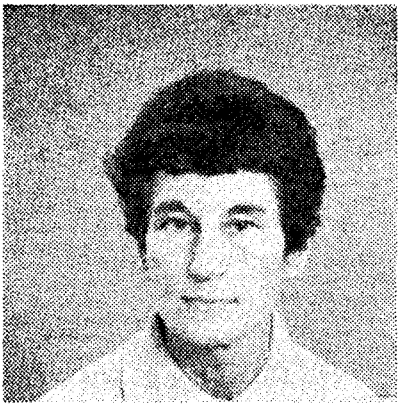
...G NEED



WE appealed to our readers for two kinds of action: increased donations to a target of £100 a month; and active help to win new readers. This is still the urgent task, but we are confident that our readers will give us the help needed for the continuance of our work.

PROGRESS REPORT

BECAUSE of the many, concerned and anxious calls we have received since publishing our urgent appeal last month, I want to give a progress report on the response so far—both in cash and circulation ideas.

Quick off the mark were four of our regular donors who pay by Bankers' Order into our account each month: they immediately took steps to double their contribution. Several hitherto occasional donors have reacted by telling us that they would become Fund 'regulars'—joining that devoted band of readers without whose unfailing support we could not function in the way we do.

Belfast friends, with a splendid sales record already, recently organised a successful *LM* meeting with our Editor as speaker. They are following this up by sending specimen copies and publicity material to the many interested people who attended and wanted to know more about *LM*. This idea multiplied could double our readership and enrich our fund. We will be glad to help in any way possible the organisation of house or public meetings of a similar character. A Stockport reader, stalwart supporter for many years, writes: 'Ten shillings as usual. I hope that the voice of *LM* will be multiplied in this period to counter the new 'socialism' of wage freeze, dividend control and uninhibited profit, together with the sell-out on Rhodesia and the underwriting of U.S. horror in Vietnam'.

Our voice, as always, is loud and clear, but its carrying power depends on your consistent financial support. This is especially urgent at this time of crisis for *LM*. **Helen Falber.**

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BARRIERS TO WORLD TRADE AT GENEVA

Quaestor

MORE than once in recent years *Labour Monthly* has shown how, in the international trade conferences at Geneva, the imperialist powers—with Britain in the forefront—have obstructed every effort by the Socialist countries to end the barriers to normal world trade; and how they have opposed the attempts of the former colonies and semi-colonies—the 'developing countries', as they are called nowadays—to climb out of the poverty and misery in which they were left by the imperialists.* During the past few months more illustrations of this have piled up—under the Labour Government as they did under the Tories.

In April the 21st session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe—in which all European states take part except the German Democratic Republic, excluded by the capitalist majority (but the USA is a member)—considered a report of its own Committee for the Development of Trade (CDT). This noted some small improvement in East-West trade in 1965, as compared with 1964; but it could have been much larger. What turned out to have been at issue was that the Socialist states and a number of the developing countries had been pressing for the decisions of the first United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), held in 1964, to be applied in full—and particularly the decision to end discrimination and other artificial obstacles employed against countries with a Socialist economic system. The main capitalist countries, however, refused to accept this (the USA, Britain, West Germany and Canada had voted against the principle at UNCTAD, and a number of other capitalist states had abstained, when 71 Socialist and developing countries voted for).

The Executive Secretary of the Commission, Vladimir Velebit of Yugoslavia, in a lecture to the Finnish Foreign Trade Association at Helsinki three weeks later (May 10, 1966), put the issue very clearly. The main problem hampering East-West trade, he said, was 'the request of the Eastern European countries to obtain most-

* Readers may recall the articles on this question published in July and October 1962, and in June and July 1964.

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favoured-nation treatment* from the Western countries, and particularly the removal of discriminatory trade restrictions imposed by the western governments; while at the time most of the western governments insist on their right to apply special treatment to their trade with eastern countries, because of differences in the economic and social systems'. This was the case, he underlined, even though an *ad hoc* group of experts from both sides had come to unanimous agreement on the need for ending such discrimination.

The debate in the Economic Commission for Europe on April 18-21 provided numerous examples of these differences. The delegates of Poland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania and the Soviet Union again and again pressed for the ending of artificial restrictions on trade, as the 1964 Conference had decided. Czechoslovakia and Hungary had jointly submitted a draft recommendation on these lines to the last (14th) CDT session—but it had been rejected by the western powers as 'premature'. The Yugoslav and Czechoslovak delegates pointed out how the western powers' discrimination was injuring their countries' chances of expanding their trade with the developing countries. The Rumanian and Soviet delegates complained particularly of discriminatory tariffs maintained against their goods (i.e., higher customs duties than on the same goods imported from capitalist countries).

Quite a number of delegates from lesser capitalist countries made hesitant gestures in the same direction. The Turkish representative said they accepted the most-favoured-nation principle. The Norwegian agreed it was necessary to remove 'administrative and other obstacles to trade'. The Italian gave cautious support to 'recommendations such as those submitted by certain eastern countries during the 14th session of the CDT'. The Austrian admitted that 'genuine reciprocity in trade matters' would have 'a favourable impact on the economic and social progress of the developing countries'.

But it was of no avail. The western imperialist countries had hardened their hearts like Pharaoh of old. These were all 'purely theoretical ideas', said Houllez (Belgium). 'Slogans and the adoption of general principles' would not solve the problems, which 'were inherent in the fundamental difference in the approach to trade of these two groups of countries', proclaimed Kalshoven (Netherlands). 'Because of the difference in economic systems', bluntly declared

* This is the provision, inserted in commercial treaties for generations, the effect of which is that each side guarantees to extend to the other the benefits allowed to any third nation (or nations). Thus it would rule out any discrimination of the kind mentioned.

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Anderson (USA), 'it would be unrealistic to expect effective reciprocity in trade relations to result from the application to both centrally-planned and market-economy countries' (i.e., to Socialist and capitalist countries, in less diplomatic jargon) 'of principles which many considered were fully applicable only to a market economy.' Most brutally outspoken was the 'Socialist' Harold Wilson's representative, Mr. Gray (UK).

'It would be ludicrous to expect the group [of experts] simply and swiftly to solve problems of east-west trade *some of which arose from the intrinsic differences between the economic and social systems of member countries*.' Further discussion of 'so-called principles' that divided market-economy countries from planned-economy countries was 'fruitless', he said. '*There was absolutely no possibility of his own delegation responding to appeals to implement each and every recommendation in the Final Act of UNCTAD, when it voted against, or abstained from voting on, some of the UNCTAD resolutions itself.*'

The latter point is characteristic. The delegation would vote under the Labour Government as it did under the Tories—for discrimination against Socialist countries, against unfettered world trade, for sacrificing world prosperity to imperialist political prejudices. And the open admission that discrimination is based on those prejudices—made by so many of the western delegates, without the slightest explanation of why different economic structures should affect trade relations—shows what a lie it has been when TUC and Labour Party right-wing leaders have again and again, over the past fifteen years, told of their concern for genuine international co-operation in the field of trade.

As for the 'most-favoured-nation principle' being 'general', 'purely theoretical' or even 'so-called' (Mr. Gray's special contribution to the chorus), it may be mentioned that British quotas and tariffs discriminating against Soviet machinery in favour of American and West German, discriminating against Soviet butter and bacon in favour of Danish and other such suppliers, and of course the refusal to accept even a small place in the market for Soviet oil—to take only one section of the Socialist countries' grievances—are not only theoretical, but severely practical. They mean keeping up the high cost of living in Britain in the interests of monopoly producers' and importers' profits! So the Labour Government defies its own rank and file on that field as well.

Equally illuminating have been the proceedings at the 4th session

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in Geneva of the Trade and Development Board, set up by the 1964 Conference and consisting of 55 countries. The session began on August 30. At its opening, the President—Pinera of Chile—spoke of the 'discouragingly slow progress' in carrying out the decisions of the UNCTAD meeting in 1964: unless there was a change 'there will be a dramatic setback in the living conditions of the majority of mankind'.

This pessimism was natural. The principal problem at UNCTAD in 1964 was not east-west trade (although this too was considered), but that of the terrible economic backwardness of the developing countries—which the states that exploited them so long were expected to make the major effort to remedy. Though the Socialist states have done more than their share by trying to advance industrialisation—the prelude to a more balanced economy—in the ex-colonial and semi-colonial countries, the imperialist Powers have done very little, and their 'stone-walling' on this question was one of the main features of the session.

Exposures of how little had been done were before the delegates in facts and figures, from the reports of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Raúl Prebisch. While the volume of *exports* by the developing countries had grown considerably during 1961-66, *their rate of economic growth* fell—thanks to the fall in world prices of raw materials which are their principal exports, and which the imperialist powers do nothing to compensate. While the 1964 Conference recognised in words that the industrial countries should transfer 1 per cent of their *gross domestic product* to these poorer countries, in fact the amount so transferred has fallen—from 0.83 per cent in 1961 to 0.69 per cent in 1965. In fact, not only has the indebtedness of the developing countries increased—from $9 billion in 1955 to $28 billion in 1963 and $38 billion in 1964—but over half of the total international flow of financial 'aid' to these countries is now offset by interest on their debts and by the outflow of profits and dividends to the foreign capitalist companies which have invested in them! The degree to which the latter have these countries by the throat was also strikingly illustrated by another set of figures: while the developing countries provide over 57 per cent of the world's sea-borne exports, their share in the world's mercantile marine is only 7 per cent.

It was not surprising that the debate at Geneva produced many descriptions of the *worsening* position of the developing countries since the 1964 Conference. In 1964, said the Pakistan delegate, they

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had been able to export 661 million square yards of cotton textiles: now, thanks to the new British restrictions, they could export only 511 million. Agricultural protective policies in 'certain industrialised countries' were hampering the exports of the developing countries, said the Chilean delegate supported by the representative of the United Arab Republic. The failure to reach agreement at the United Nations Cocoa Conference—cocoa is a basic export of several developing countries—was because they, the producing countries, had been left to shoulder the financial burden of buying up and building up stocks themselves (the Cameroon delegate). There had been expansion of trade with the Socialist countries (said the delegate of India)—but so far as their trade in primary commodities, manufactures and semi-manufactures as a whole was concerned, and as regards shipping, there had been 'stagnation', and even 'some retrogression'. The Guinea delegate said the economies of many developing countries *continued to be extensions of the economies of the former metropolitan* (*i.e., colonial*) *Powers*. The observer for Chad said that, as a result of the instability of the world cotton market, his country was producing cotton—its only commodity—'at a loss'. Ceylon's delegate pointed out that the barriers hindering access to the developed countries' markets for his country's tea, rubber and coconut products—providing 95 per cent of her export income—'still remain substantially what they were before UNCTAD came into being': and the Moroccan delegate said much the same about his country's exports of cereals, as a result of the operations of the Common Market.

Many of the delegates from such countries spoke bitterly about the difference between the professions and the practices of the leading capitalist powers. There was no evidence of any universal readiness to act on the recommendations of the 1964 Conference, and those concerning removal of obstacles to trade had been disregarded by a number of developed countries (we have seen earlier which), said the delegate of Brazil. The Pakistan delegate pointed out that the major Powers in the General Association for Tariffs and Trade (GATT)—i.e., Britain, USA and their friends—had not carried out their promises of 'high priority' in tariff concessions for the developing countries. The 'vigorous concerted action' envisaged at the 1964 Conference had not materialised, said the Turkish delegate. The delegate from Mexico complained of the new United States cotton legislation, and of the preferences to certain African countries by

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the Common Market powers, which were hurting both the other African states and Latin-American countries.

To all these accusations—for, though couched in diplomatic or almost-diplomatic language, they were accusations—the imperialist powers against whom they were levelled took up an attitude which was not quite so brutal in form as that displayed towards the Socialist countries a few months before, but essentially the same. The United Kingdom delegate, Mr. Golt, 'contested the validity' of some of the conclusions drawn from the Secretary-General's statistics, and for good measure added that remarks on the effect of tariffs on certain exports from the developing countries were 'entirely without value'. His country would at present give priority only to putting its payments balance right: but he comforted the developing countries with the assurance that it still had the 'major objective' of helping them to increase their trade, and indeed was 'deeply conscious' of the 'slowness of improvement of their position'.

Fired by this inspiring picture, the Canadian delegate said that, 'at an appropriate stage', his country too would be ready to discuss what could be done to facilitate exports from developing countries—other than by the 'Kennedy Round' for lowering tariffs (which several delegates had already pointed out was producing very little results). To increase the influx of private capital, said the delegate from West Germany, developing countries must create 'favourable legal and economic conditions'—and all his audience, recently emerging from colonial slavery, knew what *that* meant. The French delegate said that economic stagnation in the developing countries was due primarily to the 'agricultural crisis', not lack of progress in implementing UNCTAD's recommendations: which (he failed to add) had been *based* on the fact that the conditions of colonial economic backwardness, giving rise to that very 'agricultural crisis', were continuing! The Belgian delegate pooh-poohed the idea of a 'mere redistribution of already-existing resources', as between developed and developing countries. What was needed was expansion of production in the developed countries and co-operation—'mainly through private enterprise'—in creating new industries in the developing countries, as well as financing their development programmes, which they ought to integrate among themselves. 'These tasks would take many years', and UNCTAD should not 'attempt to solve all problems at the same time'.

Pie in the sky, lectures on world economics, demands for still more foreign control over the economies of the developing countries,

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assurances of hearts bleeding over their difficulties—all these were but masks for the flat refusal to carry out the decisions of the 1964 Conference, and for the barely concealed insistence that exploitation of the former colonial countries must continue.

And it is not at all surprising that the London Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference itself had a word to say, in its final communiqué of September 15:

> Prime Ministers were concerned that the economic progress in the developing countries had fallen short of the minimum average targets of the United Nations development decade. They also noted that, notwithstanding the increased efforts of certain countries, the flow of resources from the developed to the developing countries was inadequate. They recognised that the growing economic imbalance between the rich and poor countries called for a continuous and concerted effort to provide development assistance.

Allowing for the discreet language used by diplomats, this was a telling judgement on British imperialism and its associates.

POPULATION THEORIES

(In May 1964, Professor Jurgen Kuczynski, a leading economist of the German Democratic Republic, wrote in Labour Monthly *on 'Population Theories and Marxism'. This provoked a reader to correspond with him and as there has been some considerable controversy in the press of late around this issue, it was felt that our readers might now find this correspondence of interest.—Ed.,* LM.)

I have the impression that the modern conditions of increase of human numbers and the implications thereof are being avoided by many Marxists, and that the question is seen as one only of the provision of the food that future teeming millions will require. Certainly, the 'mere' provision of food will, within the lives of many now living, necessitate a veritable miracle of organisation and research that will be possible only to a socialist, if not a communist world, but at this point, that is in about 80 years from now, the Marxist theorists, if Kuczynski truly represents their views, appear to be content to rest. Says Kuczynski, quoting Lord Boyd Orr, 'the present population of 3,000 million will be well over 12,000 million'. He then quotes his lordship with approval to the effect that, in short, if the world is reorganised to the purposeful end of solving the food problem, and not unless, then it *could* be physically possible to feed the world population. And there the matter rests, it seems!

Someone, a few years back, estimated that in a very few hundred years time, at the present rate of increase, the people of the world would have just about one square yard of dry land each! When I tentatively put this question to a famous scientist, a Marxist who has contributed to *Labour Monthly*, his reply was that we

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could leave that problem to the people who would be living in those times. Yes, if by those times we mean some remote period with which we of today can have no reasonable connection. But the phenomenal increase now in process is not of this order, as is now realised. I suggest that we see a little further than our noses and plan, or suggest plans, to ensure, as far as possible, that we do not leave our successors to extract themselves, if they can, from any embroglio which is in part of our own making or about which we could, perhaps, do something in time.

Despite Kuczynski, I think it is Julian Huxley who sums up the situation correctly by saying that atomic warfare is more acute a threat than over-population but that the latter is graver because it springs from our own nature. We *must* assume that man will defeat the problem of atomic warfare or existence will cease anyway. Having done so, however, and secured our hoped-for world, more than ever, with security, will man have to control himself or face not only lack of food but even lack of room to move.

I do not think we should let capitalist theorists take the lead in ventilating this problem and seeking the answer. **R.L.P.**

Reply from Professor Kuczynski:

May I begin with the end of your letter. You write: 'I do not think we should let capitalist theorists take the lead in ventilating this problem and seeking the answer'. Of course not! But what is the problem? You say: the problem is one of too great a fertility. I say, the problem is that of providing food for the peoples of this world.

Let us assume you are right. What should one do about fertility? Should one lower it, and by how much? There are two factors to consider: the ability to raise the children, and the willingness to have so and so many children. The latter is a question of sexual education with which you can only succeed if the standard of living has reached a certain level—that is, it is a question of raising the standard of living to a certain level; that is, it really is a food question.

Look at the development of fertility in the Soviet Union. The birth rate was 47.0 in 1913 (death rate 30.2); 31.3 in 1940 (death rate 18.1); and 22.5 in 1962 (death rate 7.5). The birth rate has gone down with the raising of the standard of living and the consequent standard of education in sexual matters. But it may, of course, increase again—perhaps when the whole process of having children has been facilitated considerably.

You simply cannot handle 'population explosions' by education but *only by education following upon the raising of the standard of living*. That is, the question which you are raising is really a secondary one. As soon as you have raised the standard of living sufficiently the problem of 'family planning' is not difficult to solve. Therefore, it is not so much a problem of leaving 'to capitalist theorists the lead in ventilating this problem and seeking the answer', but of putting the proper question and of seeking the answer to it. This does not mean, of course, that we must not study most carefully the reasons for changes in fertility—other than the standard of living. No Marxist has for instance, up to now, been able to explain why fertility declined in this century in the most advanced capitalist countries up to the second world war, and why it has increased since then—and, for that matter, no capitalist theorist either. The world is full of population problems and we Marxists have given much too little attention to them. And moreover: we have to watch out that we see the problems in their right context.

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EQUALITY OF SACRIFICE— 1931 AND 1966?

&
McShane
THE MAN AT THE TOP:—
"Equality of Sacrifice—that's the big idea, friends! Let's all step down one rung!"
THE UNEMPLOYED MAN
Special Financial Crisis Number.

(Reproduced from *Plebs*, October, 1931)

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AN AMERICAN'S CENTURY

Bertha Washburn Howe

(We are proud to print a contribution from 'the other America' on a unique occasion. The author, Mrs. Bertha Howe, our good friend, reader and supporter for many years, celebrates this month the Centenary of her birth on 'Election Day', November 6, 1866. The radicals won a sweeping victory, nineteen months after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln brought a reactionary vice-president Johnson to office; and Bertha Washburn came into the world dominated in the United States by the struggle of the former slave-owners to prevent the emancipated Negroes from exercising their civil rights. Her Centenary sees the battle for Civil Rights and the fight for peace at the centre of the most powerful capitalist state in the world.

All through her long life Bertha Washburn Howe has had these two causes at heart, and has played her part on the progressive side, in the spheres which were open to her. She spent many years in law offices and as a clerk in one of the law courts of New York where, she wrote: 'I learned not to swallow whole purely partisan arguments—I always wanted to cross-examine the witness!'

Her acquaintance ranged from Ella Reeve Bloor to the family of radical publishers who published Marx's Capital. *As recently as the Korean War she went out collecting signatures to a Peace Petition on the streets of California, under the slogan: 'Not Bombs Away, But Away With Bombs!' A prolific letter-writer in good causes of recent years, she remains also physically active too.*

She writes: 'None of life's pictures are so dark that I can't find at least one ray of light—congratulate me! I wish the same to you and yours.' Every one of our readers will want to join with us in congratulating her, not only on her Centenary, but on the zest and spirit of her outlook, illumined by the light of Marxism throughout her life. Here she writes especially for Labour Monthly *readers some reflections on her century,* comparing and contrasting impressions of our two countries.*—L.M., *Ed. Board.)*

WHEN I come to put down some of the reflections of an American Centenarian, I am bound to note briefly certain differences between the economic and political history of our two countries.

When I saw yours in 1907 the United States had passed the period when the broad expanses of the continent were beckoning for attention and there were few except venturesome explorers

* She is publishing in her hundredth year a book sponsored by the American Institute of Marxist Studies, entitled *An American Century: The Recollections of Bertha W. Howe* (1866-1966), *with the collaboration of Dr. Oakley C. Johnson*, Humanities Press Inc., New York, $5.

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and their families to occupy it. The freedom of the Wild West served most of their political needs. There had also ended the era of Negro slavery, the most degraded example of social class to history. Our President Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation as of January 1, 1863, less than four years prior to my birth.

All this was legendary, together with the story of my Washburn ancestors' arrival at Plymouth Rock aboard the next ship after the Mayflower. And now, if I can pass beyond these stories of my childhood, let me recount some memories of what I knew to be facts.

My father was a man free from religious superstition, and though one of the many poor farmers of that day, he was loved by young men of the neighbourhood because he talked about English literature and discussed current news which he got from Horace Greeley's New York weekly, *Tribune* (to which Marx contributed). Later, at my grandfather's home in New York City I came in contact with the progressive thought of that day, with a glance at the Communist Manifesto and groups familiar with it. Traces still were to be seen of earlier efforts to explore new areas of thought, some so radical as to be shocking;* but when I knew it their place had been largely taken by modern, more acceptable activities, among them the Sunrise Club, a loosely formed group which met bi-monthly for an evening dinner, a main speaker, and open discussion.

It was due largely to the variety of its speakers that I was able to see for myself some of the startling differences between our two countries. One of them, indelibly fixed in my mind, was through the Englishman, John Turner, who spoke at the Club in early 1907. At that time he was organiser of the National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks, but five years later he became its General Secretary.† Our daily press had told of his arrival at South Ferry and being met there by frightened officials and taken to Ellis Island for interrogation, for on his passport he had described himself as a 'Philosophical Anarchist'. After a few

* I knew Emma Goldman, the Anarchist, and some of her family well. Emma was sweet and lovely in private and a firebrand in public. She told me she left her Russian home when she was twelve years old, filled with anger against a religious, over-bearing father.

† John Turner (1865-1934) was the first organiser appointed for his union, of which he became General Secretary shortly before the First World War, in 1912; his standpoint was one of opposition to the war. In 1921 be became a member of the governing body of the Trades Union Congress and was a member of the General Council until 1924, when he retired from holding office in his union after 25 years' service. He was never a member of the Labour Party, but he served on the Joint Research and Information Department, when Sidney Webb was its Chairman, made up of members of the Labour Party Executive and the General Council of the Trades Union Congress, being one of the four representatives of the latter body. He also co-operated closely with the Labour Research Department, of which *Labour Monthly's* Associate Editor, R. Page Arnot, was General Secretary, and R. Palme Dutt a member of its executive.

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weeks he was permitted to land and was given some days of liberty before returning to England. The Club was lucky in getting him for one of its speakers; it was an evening long to be remembered.

It happened that a few months later I was able to visit England for myself, and since the Trades Union Congress was being held in Bath, my companion and I attended one of the morning sessions. Whom should I see sitting on the platform among the other speakers but my Philosophical Anarchist! I sent up a note and we arranged to meet after adjournment. He took me to a number of meetings in London which I found most interesting. At the time his union was fighting against the 'living-in system' imposed on shop assistants in department stores. The employer argued that they might carry away merchandise if permitted to go home to sleep, and so he forced them literally to 'live-in'. The contrast to what the working-class of England and my own would put up with, was almost unbelievable. Happily, I learned soon afterwards that the 'revolt', a part of which I witnessed, had proved successful. As a tourist I could only scan the general condition of the British working-class, for I met mostly only those who were pitifully anxious to please; but I sensed the growing revolt of the rank and file.

In those days, amongst British socialists seeking their way forward was an organisation of Guild Socialists with which I was in contact. A weekly newspaper was set up which circulated among liberal Americans. It is in connection with this newspaper that my recollection goes to another cultured, eloquent Englishman who was our speaker at the Sunrise Club in late 1916. By that time our American Century had been going through for many months the emotional agony, though not yet military agony, of the First World War. Our peace-loving President Woodrow Wilson had been willing to go no further toward taking a part in it than warnings to the Germans against interference with our shipping on the high seas. The purpose of our visitor in speaking to us was to speed up if possible the day when we too should join in the war against Germany.

The fact that the British authorities had stopped the delivery of *The Guild Socialist* rankled within me. How could I be expected to remain silent with this prominent Englishman before me? I couldn't and I didn't. He heard me with apparent surprise and hurriedly pencilled a note for himself. The result was the lifting of the ban almost immediately.

Precisely when I first saw a copy of *Labour Monthly* I do not remember. When it was founded in 1921, and the war having ended

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only three years earlier, there was financial distress in both our countries. Later, I remember during the Second World War that the publishers had been obliged to use thin blue printing paper, and it was small in size and destitute of any styling. As I receive my copies now—a credit to the printer's art—I can't help wondering whether I truly remember those early days, or have conjured up a dream instead. However that may be, I know I have never since lost sight of its clear and logical presentation of fact and theory as set forth month after month by the Editor and his always devoted staff.

As my own American Century begins to show age, the contrast between our two countries has largely faded away. The majority of your working-class no longer hides its fervour, as it tried to do when I saw it in 1907. But now it has a new obstacle to meet, oddly enough, that of Colour, which happily we seem to be on the road to overcoming.

What we do here never gets to be big paper news unless we demonstrate by the thousands through one of our Southern States. But in the end *they* will give up and adapt to us, since they can never conquer us. In time you will learn, as we are beginning to, that the disappearance of this obstacle will serve to disclose another more vital one to be overcome. With capital and labour still contending, it is in that conflict that we must look for an explanation of a society, dominated by a few rich on the one hand, balanced by unemployment and poverty on the other, and held together by a middle class always with uncertainty staring it in the face.

I counsel you to be patient with your recent influx of coloured citizens—citizens, yes! One smiles when noticing how you were caught by your own good-natured generosity so many years ago, before you thought deeply enough to discover the real class struggle which underlay and still underlies most of our political and economic troubles. I trust no reader of this sly dig will hold it against me, for if I admit that 'with all thy faults I love thee still', it is with the painful knowledge that we share the same frailty: the Citizenship of the Negro and all of us still suffering from the profit-taker. We cannot expect real peace, of course, until we have a one-class economy. But since the human race has limped along on class struggle since time immemorial, it can certainly take a few years more of it; and I fully believe that time is on our side.

Not being a prophet nor a daughter of one, I decline to speculate on the problems which humanity will face after the Marxist economy has meshed with the desperate but ineffective efforts of Capital to avoid it, and we have at least a modicum of peace and justice.

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LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE: DELEGATE'S REPORT

Councillor A. Tomlinson*

WHEN making an analysis of the Labour Party Conference it is necessary to remember the way in which the final agenda reached the floor of Conference. Propositions had been moved months ago in Ward meetings and branches and were voted on in Management Committees; amended and finally composited, using no other words than those contained in the original propositions. Votes were mostly decided before any speeches were made and striking evidence of the lack of influence of the platform speeches was given by Eirene White's stumbling performance on Rhodesia which could not prevent the Executive's report being carried by 4,664,000 to 1,591,000.

On the other hand, competent speeches were made by Barbara Castle, Wilson, Callaghan, Brown and Margaret Herbison, and it must be remembered that many members of Conference are from the older age groups, often very conventional in outlook, so that there was a good deal of latent support for the Ministers' speeches. Yet Conference was obviously troubled. There was no enthusiasm for the course which the majority were taking. Fringe meetings organised by 'Victory for Socialism', Labour Peace Fellowship, the Movement for Colonial Freedom and *Tribune* were packed and with overflow meetings in some cases. That means several hundred delegates were broadly in support of the ideas being developed at these meetings. It was generally accepted on the Left that if only defence expenditure could be sufficiently cut, our balance of payments problem could be solved.

The platform's reply was that a cut had been made after an extensive review. This is more apparent than real, because it is based on what the previous Conservative Government would have been spending by this time. Alternatively, Ministers would state that it took years for cuts to become effective or that we could not make very severe cuts because we had to support our friends in many different parts of the world.

In the end the Executive had its way, but with two significant setbacks. The Transport and General Workers' Union motion calling

* Mr. Tomlinson is a Labour Councillor for the Greater London Borough of Barnet.

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for a contraction in Western Germany; withdrawal from Malaysia, Singapore and the Persian Gulf by 1969-70; and a defence budget below £1,750 million was carried by 3,470,000 votes to 2,932,000. The Fire Brigades' Union motion on ending of the war in Vietnam (calling for pressure on the United States to end the war in Vietnam) was carried by 3,851,000 to 2,644,000.

The whole economic debate was conducted in a sober mood. Many delegates could cast their minds back to the seemingly endless nothingness of the thirties. They were nagged by the thought that Harold Wilson might be a modern version of Ramsay MacDonald. But they were also, for the most part, the very workers and technicians on whom, with their fellow-workers over the country, the nation has to rely for its increased production. This was no Liberal Party jamboree. Here were a cross-section of the very core of the nation. And they did not like what was happening. But they somewhat reluctantly voted for the platform and the Government. Yet again, they fired a warning shot across the bows. They carried the T & GWU emergency resolution expressing 'grave concern at the sharp growth in unemployment' by 3,289,000 votes to 3,136,000.

In the final analysis I think that Conference decided to give the Government a year's grace to attempt to put our economic affairs in order. But, if by next October, a really viable wages, prices and incomes policy to look after the interests of the lowly-paid workers, to reward increased productivity and establish social justice all round, has not been put into operation and if there has been no real cut in defence spending, then we shall see a very different sort of Conference. The platform could very well be defeated. Some more adventurous people have begun to question the total set-up and some day Socialism will break through.

LABOUR MONTHLY FORTY YEARS AGO

The very facts of the breakdown of capitalism, which are made the basis of pleas of facing economic realities and accepting cuts in wages, should lead the whole labour movement . . . to the necessity of pressing home the fight now more than ever, and, so far from accepting cuts in wages as an inevitable necessity, endeavouring instead to raise the fight to the revolutionary issues which are the sole answer to the so-called economic realities. . . . The reformist leadership, instead of recognising the position and drawing the revolutionary conclusion, have in growing panic at the situation forgotten all their Socialism and given themselves up to the illusory task of endeavouring to patch up capitalism.

(From Notes of the Month, *Labour Monthly*, November 1926.)

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SUEZ—TEN YEARS AFTER

C. Enisah

ON November 5, 1956, British paratroops were dropped on Port Said. The following day, Eden's invasion of Egypt started in earnest with the landing of troops from the massive armada that had been assembled during the summer. Its immediate target was to recapture the Suez Canal, held in fief by an international monopoly for 90 years but nationalised in July 1956. On December 22, less than seven weeks after the start of the invasion, the last British soldiers sailed from Port Said, leaving the canal in Egyptian hands. The French contingents in the joint adventure had already re-embarked, and the Israeli advance towards the Eastern bank of the canal had been made to stop.

Today, ten years after the tripartite aggression, an official inquiry into the accusation of collusion between the three Governments is still awaited. Eden's hypocrisy in describing the landing of British troops as a 'peace-making move' to separate the Israelis and the Egyptians has been repeatedly exposed. He has been given the lie by no less a person than Mr. Pineau, then French Foreign Minister, who has admitted that the whole operation was carefully planned beforehand by the British, French and Israeli Governments, who bound themselves by a treaty in October 1956.

The story of Eden's sordid deals with his French and Israeli counterparts may not yet be complete. An inquiry into Tory methods may well be a profitable exercise for Mr. Wilson. But much more to the point in the present world situation would be an inquiry into the motives of imperialist policies.

Eden's aim in attacking Egypt in 1956 was the same as the U.S. aim in Vietnam today: to try to suppress the liberation movement in countries struggling for their real independence and perpetuate imperialist control in one form or another. This is the aim that is being furthered by Mr. Wilson's support of the war in Vietnam and his continuation of Tory policy 'East of Suez'.

The collapse of Eden's plan for a colonialist come-back in Egypt was due above all to the strength of the anti-colonial forces throughout the world, the firm stand of the Socialist camp, of the Egyptian people and of other emergent nations in Africa and Asia. His criminal folly in 1956 was to believe that it was possible to reverse the wheels of history. He dreamed of putting down the nationalist

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movement not only in Egypt but also, by repercussion, in other emergent nations and above all in the oil-rich Middle East. He mounted the military invasion with two objectives: to protect the foreign interests exploiting the Suez Canal and to teach a lesson to the nationalists in Egypt and in other Arab countries still in the clutches of foreign monopoly companies. Both aims have been defeated.

To start with the Canal itself, the fiction that the foreign exploiting company was indispensable to serve world shipping has been exploded. The Suez Canal Company was only there to serve the interests of its international shareholders. The alleged fears that the Egyptians did not have the 'necessary technical and managerial skills' have been proved utterly false. The tonnage of shipping using the Suez Canal more than doubled between 1955 and 1965. The Canal has been deepened and widened meanwhile under a development programme still in progress. Of the 240 pilots today, only 50 are non-Egyptian, and it is planned to dispense altogether with foreign pilots in the near future.

Even more important perhaps is the fact that the invasion of 1956 became the starting point of the real battle for Egyptian economic independence, of a chain of economic and social reforms that have made Cairo the focal point of the progressive movement in the Middle East.

The nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company was the first of a series of measures which have gradually destroyed the bases of monopoly capital, first foreign then local, in the United Arab Republic. Immediately after the defeat of the invasion, British and French banks, insurance companies, industrial and commercial concerns—a large slice of foreign interests that had controlled the economy of the country for so long—were taken over by the State. The battle for national independence on the beaches of Port Said thus provided a base for State control over an important sector of the economy. This base was enlarged later with the nationalisation of other foreign interests.

This was an important step for the economic advance of an underdeveloped country, with a population of nearly 30 million increasing at the rate of 3 per cent a year, urgently needing a quick industrial development to increase its resources and to give work to the millions of unemployed. For as long as the construction of new industries was largely dependent on foreign capital and the support of foreign banks, little could be achieved.

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For a while, the UAR Government adopted the policy of using the State sector as a stimulant for industrial development, relying on local private capital to provide a substantial part of the necessary investment and leaving it all the usual profits. The State for its part was financing heavy industries and starting on the construction of the high dam with the technical and financial help of the Soviet Union. Indeed, the Egyptian capitalist class was entitled to believe that it was then in the command of the situation. While continuing an active role on the anti-imperialist front, the Government was entrenched at home in a policy of repression of working-class organisations, characterised by its persecution of militant trade unionists, communists and left-wing intellectuals. At the same time, it was trying to press on with industrialisation.

The contradictions of the situation became apparent when planning began in earnest. The investments in the new industries were to come partly from foreign loans—secured on easy terms from Socialist countries, on hard terms from the Western world—and partly from local private capital. But private capital was not prepared to co-operate, except under conditions that would have meant slowing down the programme in order to safeguard its own profit.

Moreover, it had been thought that the Agrarian Reform Law of 1952 would have released capital from the landowning class; but many big landowners had managed to avoid the land reform legislation, and in any case they were inclined to invest their compensation and profits in real estate rather than in industry. The battle for economic progress was thus reaching an impasse.

The turning point was the series of nationalisation measures of July 1961, by which the State took over most of the Egyptian-owned enterprises, including banks and insurance companies. At the same time the Agrarian Reform was tightened up, the maximum ownership reduced to 100 acres, and compensation reduced to a maximum of £15,000. This was followed some time later by other blows at private capital, including the sequestration of private fortunes in some cases.

As its conflict with the local capitalists came to a head, the Government turned to the working class for support. True, the trade unions have remained strictly controlled by the State and strikes have remained illegal, but there have been important gains: the representation of the workers on the boards of management, the allocation of 25 per cent of the profits for the workers (10 per cent in cash and 15 per cent in the form of social services), the reduction of the

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working week to 42 hours, the improvement of the wages of the skilled workers, and the introduction of a minimum wage.

It has been acknowledged that capitalist methods have failed to solve the UAR's economic problems, and must be discarded. The Charter of National Action of May 1962 recognised that 'the socialist solution is an historic inevitability imposed by reality and by the hopes of the masses as well as the changing nature of the world in the second half of the twentieth century'. The Charter itself is not a socialist Constitution. But it opens the way for future political and social advances. An illustration of both its value and its limitations is the clause allocating half the National Assembly seats to representatives of the working class and the peasantry, but extending the definition of the term 'worker' to company directors, even those with a salary of £4,000 a year, and the definition of peasants to owners of up to 25 acres (in a country where nearly two-thirds of the landowners have under 5 acres).

The Egyptian working class and the peasantry will no doubt assert their rights as they assert their role in building their country's economy and in doing away with the remnants of the past. While building and operating hundreds of new factories and reclaiming enormous areas of land, they are also setting up their new social centres, hospitals and schools, in some places taking over the palaces of the rich. They have a long way to socialism, but socialism has become their watchword.

In an area of the world where many young nations have still to free themselves from the grip of imperialism, the changes taking place in the UAR have put the fighters for social progress and their enemies on the alert. The success of the nationalisation of the Suez Canal and the advance of the UAR on the non-capitalist path have had deep echoes. Nationalised industries are becoming an important part of the economies of Syria and Iraq. The word 'nationalisation' is haunting the foreign oil companies still exploiting the black gold of the Middle East. To hang on to their concessions, the U.S. and British Governments are propping up the archaic rulers from whom they expect docility. But the overthrow of the monarchy in Iraq and Yemen is rightly seen as a sign that the Arab peoples are determined to get rid of their reactionary rulers and of their supporters.

The Islamic Alliance, sponsored by the Kings of Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Morocco, is the latest device to resist the advance of progressive policies in the Arab countries and in the Middle East as a whole. It has been praised in Washington as the alliance of

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righteous rulers against the spread of heretical socialism, and it has earned the blessing of our Labour Government in the form of the sale of bombers and other war equipment for King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. What is expected from King Faisal is not only that he will be strengthened on his throne to protect the oil companies, but that he will continue to build up and finance the anti-democratic forces in the area, to help the petty rulers in Southern Arabia against the Aden nationalists and the claimant to the throne against the Republicans in the Yemen, and that he will support the opponents of President Nasser in the United Arab Republic. For it is no coincidence that the opposition to President Nasser's policy in the UAR is now led by the Moslem Brotherhood, a reactionary political party disguised as a religious movement and as such enjoying the assistance of King Faisal and his Islamic Alliance.

Mr. Wilson's co-operation with the forces of reaction in the Middle East must be denounced, and he must be forced to change course, as the late Mr. Gaitskell was forced to change from support for Eden in the early stages of the Suez crisis into opposition to the invasion in November 1956. The lesson of Suez has not been lost on the peoples of the Middle East. It must not be lost on us.

BOOK REVIEWS

Lucifer and Other Poems
Salme Dutt
Mitre Press, 104 pp., 10s. 6d.

THESE ARE THE POEMS written during four years (1933-36) of the life of a woman who from the age of seventeen until she died two years ago, aged seventy-six, devoted her energy, intelligence and imagination to the struggles for national independence and Communism. Born in Esthonia, educated in Russia, living first in Finland, later in England, a friend of Lenin's, a moving spirit in the foundation of the British Communist Party, she led the life of a revolutionary of an heroic generation.

The first half of the book consists of a series of longish satirical poems about Lucifer as the agent of fascism. For example, Lucifer invents a shirt—a black one—with which to unify the nation.

> I think we've solved the problem
> of disunity
> Long live the classless society
> Where shirt has banished all
> distinction
> And people live in peace until
> extinction

The second half of the book includes shorter, more lyrical poems. One of the poems I like best is simply called *Landscape*.

> A desolate unfruitful field
> Scattered scraggy trees shaking
> Their tired-out heads
> Looking accusingly
> At a forgotten field-gun
> In the corner of a

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Bullet-ridden farmhouse
Where a woman stands
Motionless
With a child in her arms
Gazing
With lifeless eyes
Out of a face of iron
At the lifelike corpse
Of a dead soldier
At her feet.

Another one is called *Law and Order*.

The stage was set.
They were ready for him
Not his fellow men
To put him on trial
But Law and Order.

He stood in the dock.
A man?
Eight days ago
He was a young man
Like another.

He'd broken a law—
Sure enough—
He knew it
Not over repentant
But ready for trial.

This wasn't enough
For Law and Order
Little by little
In eight days time
They worked a miracle
Until—
A criminal stood
Before them:
Crumpled clothes
Self-conscious
Haggard
Defiant.

The stage was set
For Law and Order.

Her poetry is uneven. At its worst, it is too impatient—and so takes the short-cut of cliché. The emotion and vision are always sincere, but the poem itself is not granted sufficient importance, is insufficiently wrought.

Forge, workers!
Forge your weapons!
Every hour of the day
Steel it
Oil it
Sharpen it
The Party of the workers
The Communist Party.

This is a battle cry, an extended slogan—but it is not poetry. It may inspire through its words those who share the poet's attitude. Such inspiration has great value. But it is not poetry.

At her best, as in the two poems I have quoted in extenso, she writes with the clarity and concentration of a poet whose heart and mind are working as one. And then, as always when this is achieved in poetry, the result is memorable.

JOHN BERGER.

An Inquiry Into Enoughness

Daniel Lang

Secker & Warburg, 216 pp., 25s.

'I CAN'T PROVE IT, but without conferences like this one, it would be harder than it is to imagine that things are going to be better.' So said Academician Artsimovich to the author of this volume after the 1963 Pugwash Conference in Dubrovnik. For disarmament supporters this book makes nostalgic reading as they contemplate the wilder and wilder lunges of the U.S. military-industrial complex in Vietnam. It consists of six, long *New Yorker* articles on such themes as Project Gnome, the underground nuclear test which 'vented' in New Mexico in 1961; the Aldermaston March of 1963 as seen by a liberal American; three visits to the Geneva test ban and disarmament conferences in 1960-61-62; the 1963 Pugwash Conference; and finally the question which gives the volume its title: 'Just

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how much is enough when it comes to nuclear weapons?'

Daniel Lang, who has also produced poetry and short stories and has been on the staff of the *New Yorker* for some 25 years, writes simply, straightforwardly and well, allowing the facts to speak for themselves. He has the poet's eye and ear for the significant detail and the revealing statement, so, though he makes no conclusions himself, we see clearly that it is the military-industrial complex which commands the proliferation of nuclear weapons. We see, too, that such able and well-meaning men as Jerome Wiesner are so enmeshed in the state machine as to be helpless, so that disarmament and peace can only be brought about by constant pressure on that machine. A book worth getting into the local library.

A. R. WALKER.

Left in the Centre

Robert E. Dowse

Longmans, 232 pp., 42s.

SEEKING 'to explain the reasons underlying the decline of the "left wing" of the Labour Party after the Great War', the author argues that the decline was due to 'structural factors which left little room for manoeuvre'. With this thesis, he has produced a well-documented study of the rise and fall of the ILP's influence in the Labour Party, its leading personalities at different times and their policies. In this sense the book is a contribution to the history of the Labour movement.

But the author's eagerness to lay the blame for the ILP's decline on 'structural factors'—chiefly the Labour Party's building up of constituency organisations after 1918—leads him from any serious examination of the political factors involved, in spite of some passing comments.

Much of the material shows the utter confusion created by the ILP leaders, striving one after the other to preserve the legend of the ILP as the revolutionary Left while at the same time moving steadily to the Right. With the ILP rejection of proposals for a united party of the revolutionary Left, and the formation of a Communist Party in 1920, the ILP could only continue as a decoy to lead those who thought of themselves as revolutionary socialists away to the Right. This was the basic factor in the decline of the ILP, in spite of its 1926 programme 'Socialism In Our Time' and the 1928 Cook-Maxton manifesto. All attempts to find a 'middle way' between Social Democracy and Communism were doomed to fail, as many members of the ILP realised when they joined in the Communist Party.

EMILE BURNS.

'What I did was right . . .'

Bram Fischer

Mayibuye Publications, 32 pp., 1s.

THIS PAMPHLET GIVES verbatim all the essential passages of the great 'speech from the dock' made by Bram Fischer on his trial before the Supreme Court of the Union of South Africa at Pretoria on March 28, 1966. Fischer was sentenced to life imprisonment for his noble work in fighting against the foul apartheid policy of the White racists who at present control and misgovern South Africa.

The speech, which must rank among the finest in all the long history of political defences, was nominally addressed to the Court, and must have given it cause for uncomfortable thoughts; but in reality it was spoken to the whole world, and contains both for lawyers and for laymen a rich crop of lessons, of which I quote only one or two:

'What should men do when they see

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millions of their fellow-citizens intolerably misgoverned? When is it right, in resisting such misgovernment, to break the laws of the misgovernors and resort to violence?'

'How can Marxism help us to fuller understanding in such circumstances? What is the role of Communists and Communist Parties in such struggles, and how do they live up to their responsibilities?'

We should all read this speech for our own enlightenment, and to feel for a moment nearer to one of this century's greatest men. It is good for us to see how such men can sacrifice everything at the call of principle and duty, and thereby enrich the world and advance the cause of humanity, freedom, and justice.

D. N. PRITT.

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